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ABSTRACT

Designed for use in the home, this booklet describes how someone can be taught how the alphabet works; that is, by decoding the ABC's into spoken language. Among the steps to decoding discussed in this booklet are these: (1) teaching the sounds of individual letters; (2) teaching the different sounds of the vowels; (3) sounding out little words; (4) teaching diphthongs; and (5) dealing with exceptions in the English language. The booklet concludes with suggestions on appropriate reading materials. (RS)

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Elaine Acker Albert

SYSTEMATIC BASIC PHONICS

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

. b c/c d . f g/g h . j k l m n .
p q r s t . v w x y/y z

a e i o u

ab eb ib ob ub
ac ec ic oc uc
ad ed id od ud

A E I O U

ba be bi bo bu
ca *ce* *ci* co cu
da de di do du

sh th ch wh ph qu -ng

er ir ur | ar or | ow ou | aw au | oo oo | oy oi | ti ci si

A Hornbook for the 70th Century

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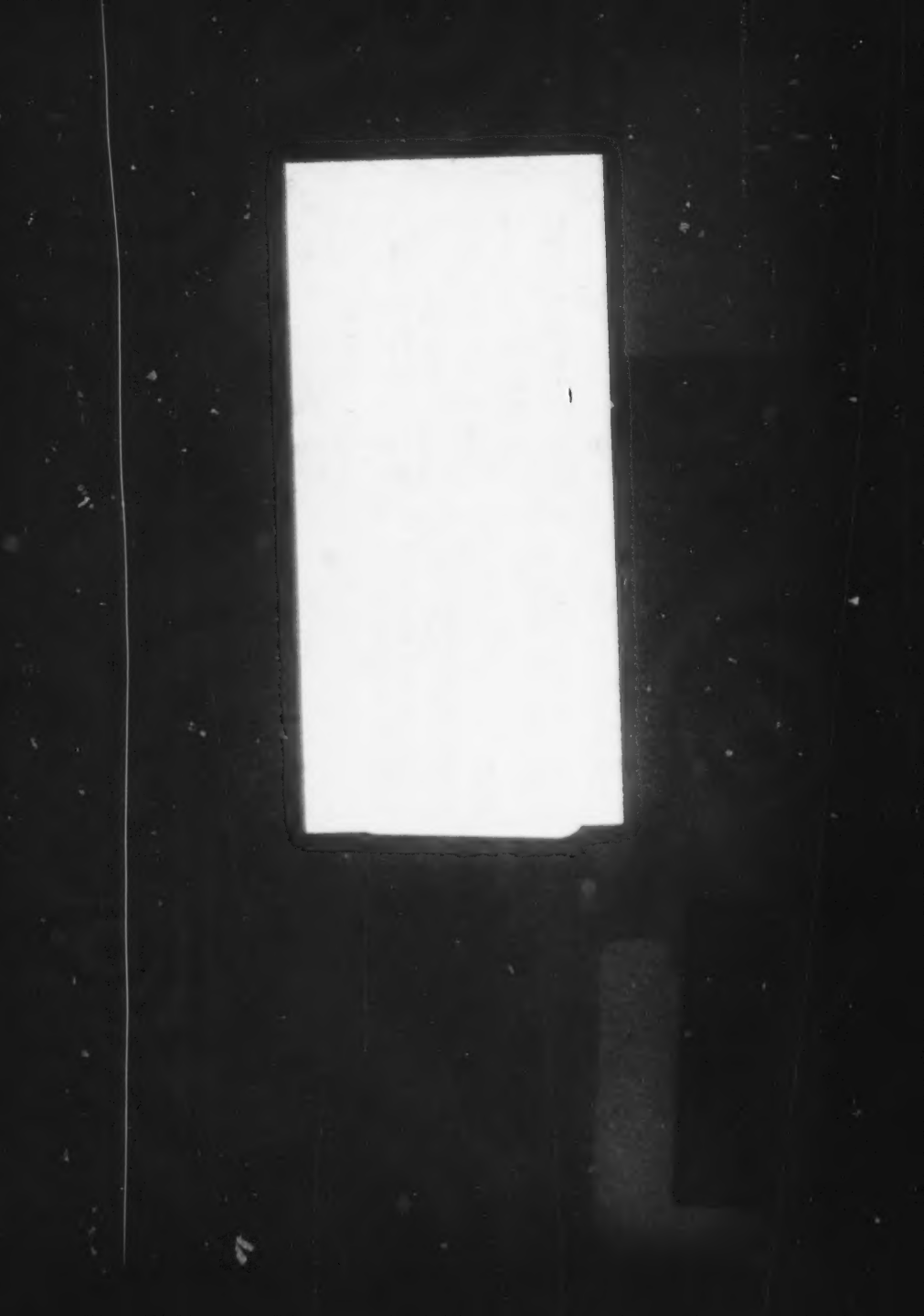

"Right here at my kitchen table," she said, "I could sit down every night and teach someone to read. Just show me what to do, and how to begin."

Here's a HOW, using basic phonics. This is the time-honored method for teaching reading. It has worked for more than 2,000 years, ever since the Phoenicians invented the alphabet.

Our ancestors did it at home, before their children went to school. Sometimes older children have even taught younger children by this method, while "playing school"! What it takes to start is paper and pencil. Our ancestors used a slate, remember?

Some adults who missed out on reading can best be helped at home, right in their own neighborhood: No difficulties about meetings with a stranger for tutoring, no transportation problems, no worry about child care during a lesson. It does take practice, of course, but here's a method that you can work, to help a friend.

How the Alphabet Works for Teaching Someone to Read

To start, all you need is paper and pencil. Some ABC cards or Scrabble letters can be helpful but not necessary.

1. The learner may already know the sounds for some of the letters of the alphabet. If not, teach him the SOUNDS for the letters: sssss ffffff mmmm. Notice that each letter, if you name it out loud, will give some hint of its sound, except for H and W. [The letter C can sound like K or like S, depending on what letter comes after it, like this: Cat, *Cent*, *City*, Cop, Cut, *Cycle*.] Be careful not to add any grunts to the sounds of the letters. Sound it *bbbbb*, not "buh". Sound it *ttttt*, not "tuh". Those extra grunts get in the way later when you try to sound out a word.

Even children as young as four will enjoy sounding out letters.

2. Five of the letters are Vowels: a e i o u. These are the hardest to learn, but they make a big difference. Each of them has two possible sounds: "long" and "short". The long vowel sounds just like the name of the letter. The difficult vowels are the short vowels. The short vowels sound like this:

a as in apple, bag, Andy
e as in egg, red, Edward
i as in igloo, wig, Indian
o as in ox, top, Otto
u as in umbrella, mud, Uncle

It may take a lot of practice to get these clearly. But it is worth while because these 5 short vowels are used in almost two-thirds of all our words.

ALL WORK IN THIS BOOK IS DONE OUT LOUD.
SILENT READING COMES LATER.

3. The letters that are not vowels are called "consonants."

Put one consonant with one of these short vowels. This makes a beginning sound for a word, like this:

na sa ra ba la
se de ge te je
mi ti si hi ri
jo ro co po lo
nu ru bu tu ju

Then mix them up: ti fa le jo hu mi sa re ri nu

Be sure to stay with the short vowels on this, as in these little words:
bat, get, zip, hot, bum.
man, red, tip, fox, sun

Encourage the learner to make or find some of these little words himself. The learner learns best, not so much by what we show him, as by what he figures out for himself.
All work in this program is reading out loud.

4. Next make some little sandwich words-- one consonant, then a vowel, then one more consonant. In the middle is a short vowel, like this:

hat	mad	rag	ten	wet	jet	zip
dig	win	box	job	cut	hum	tub

Sound them out, out loud, letter-by-letter, left-to-right.
You and the learner can make dozens and hundreds of these little sandwich words. ABC cards are nice for this practicing. Paper and pencil are fine.

If you are working with an adult, everything explained so far can be done in half an hour. It will encourage the learner to go fast so that he can figure out dozens of these words right away.

It will be helpful to teach the learner two words: the, a.
Then you can read aloud some little sentences:

Ed got a job. Tom got on the bus. Gus fell in the mud.
Jim had a pet fox. Meg has a zip-up bag.
Get us a big box. A fat man had a nap on the bus.

Use a pointer, (called a FESCUE or straw) to sound out the **letters** one by one, from left-to-right. If the learner slips up on this and tries to read any words backward, cover the last letter with a card until he has sounded out the first consonant and the short vowel.

Sounding out the **letters** from Left to Right is very important. The learner who does not catch on to this will soon be trying to read "was" for "saw". Next thing you know, somebody will call him "dyslexic" or "learning disabled". There's nothing the matter with his brain, no! He was just trying to read backwards! So show him how to read the letters from left-to-right. There is a difference between--

pan...nap but...tub top...pot pit...tip bib...did

It is not babyish to use a pointer. A pointer can be a big help. Even college students have discovered that a pointer can useful.

> *The goal is Automaticity. That means that sounding-out is so well learned that it is used without thinking. Whisper-reading usually comes before silent reading.*

5. After the learner has made and read lots of these little sandwich words, try something fancy. Put an extra consonant into some of these simple words, like this: Sound them out loud.

snap drag lift drip grab stop grump strap

All these words and dozens more can be made with one short vowel in the middle of the sandwich. Here are some, but you and the learner can make some more yourselves. Sound each letter. USE A POINTER.

crab grip stuff bend trap brag yell strip flat
luck plant bell twin list drugs pack strict

Try some longer words-- sounding each letter:

dragon invent trumpet wagon difficult taxes banana
telegram octopus umbrella electric discuss
windmill connect pumpkin hundred bandit

6. Our alphabet does not have enough letters for English. Therefore we put two letters together to get the extra sounds we need. Like this:

sh as in shop, shell, shut, fish, cash
th as in thin, thick, with, this. bath
ch as in chop, chin, rich, much, lunch

Let the learner use some of his little sandwich words and turn them into other words by using sh, ch, or th. Read aloud:

ship that chop crash path wish

You can put some of these words together to make dumb sentences.

Mitch stepped off the path and fell in a mud puddle.
The fish is in a pan in the kitchen, but it smells bad.
Will the bank cash this check that Tom has given us?
Did Ann smash that glass? Pick up the chips, Ann.
Ed got a job at the shop. Jim has a job with the bus.
Ellen has a big red bag that can zip shut.

7. So far we have used only the short vowels. The long vowels are easy: each one has the same sound as its name. To make a vowel say its name, we use another vowel to push it, like this:

paid, wait, aid, raise, claim, mail
feet, tree, see, heat, neat, freeze, team,
pie, tie, died, lies, cried, tried
coat, road, soap, oatmeal, loaf, Joe
due, sue, cue, juice, Tuesday, Sue

In some words the pusher vowel may be separated from the vowel it is pushing, like this:

late, game, save, base, date, Jane
fire, live, wife, pile, line, wide
joke, bone, more, hole
tune, June, cure, use, excuse

Some end vowels are long: go, me, she, so, no, we. Also: by,my.why.
Make some more sentences using these patterns. ALWAYS READ ALOUD!

8. Often if two consonants get between the first vowel and that pusher vowel, the pushing doesn't push through. Like this:

late/later.....ladder. dine/diner.....dinner.
like/liked.....licked. slide/sliding....skidding

Let the learner figure out which of these words works which way, long vowel or short vowel, and tell why. Read aloud:
slope / slopped file / filing / filling
supper / super holly / holy

Although this rule doesn't always work, it works well enough to be useful. Here the learner can figure out whether the first vowel is long or short, and can tell why:

tiger	rabbit	holly	holy
liked	licked	dim	dime
backing	baking	scrap	scrape

When in doubt, try both ways: which one makes sense? It takes a bit of flexibility to read English,-- but no guessing!. Use phonics!

9. By now the learner can begin to pick out many words that he can read from any page of a book or magazine. He might try reading some familiar things, or songs he knows. Read aloud. *Use a pointer.*

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

Mary had a little lamb
Its fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary went.
That lamb was sure to go.

Puff the magic dragon lived by the sea
And frolicked in the autumn mist in a land called Honah Lee.

We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

God bless America, land that I love.
God bless America, my home, sweet home.

10. There are some other combinations of letters to make sounds that are not in the alphabet. Like this:

au or aw as in auto, awful, law, cause, haul, draw
ou or ow as in owl, ouch, cow, house, down, loud
oi or oy as in oil, boy, toy, spoil, join, enjoy

oo as in book, look, crook. Or else--
oo as in moon, food, spoon. Which sound makes sense?

ar as in car, jar, tar, far, artist, spark
or as in corn, north, horn, morning
er-ir-ur--- These all sound the same, as in
her--first--nurse ... jerk bird burn

Notice the sound of *ng* in *morning* or *drawing*.
Sometimes the letters *ti,si,ci* substitute for *sh* like this:
nation, permission, special.

You and the learner can find examples of these sounds in the newspaper, in magazines, in children's books, or on the backs of cereal boxes,-- and read the words OUT LOUD. Use a fescue-pointer.

11. What shall we do about all those Exceptions? Well, at first we'll just tell the beginner a word he can't sound out. At the same time we can show him the parts of the word he *can* sound out. You will find that those Exceptions bother the grownups far more than they bother the children: the children adjust to them. It takes a bit of flexibility to read English,-- but **no guessing**. Match the letters to the sounds enough to prove you're right. "Pony" is not "horse", no! How much of English can be sounded out? Most of it,-- lots more than three-quarters of all the words in the dictionary. And all the words can be sounded out at least partly,-- if you know how the letters work.

12. Don't overlook the usefulness of re-reading the same thing again,-- two, three, four, five times. Re-reading is a powerful tool.

How about those Older Children, the ones who maybe can, maybe can't read? The best-of-all way to find out is to have the child read out loud to you. This can tell you far more about the child's progress than any test scores or report cards. Look over his shoulder, while he reads aloud: how's he doing? Guessing and missing the little words are signs of trouble.

There are Three Stages in learning how to read:--

Stage One: learning how the alphabet works, that is, decoding the ABC's into the spoken language. This little book is about Stage One.

Stage Two: oral practice until this decoding becomes automatic. During this stage the beginner learns to add expression and tone-of-voice by reading out loud and hearing himself. Some individuals need more time on stage two, some less. When he has had enough oral practice, the learner will go on to Stage Three on his own.

Stage Three: rapid silent reading for information and appreciation of literature. Stage Three follows naturally after sufficient practice on Stage Two. This oral practice may take as long as a year. Let your child read out loud to you,-- or to his teddy bear!. The "look-say" or "whole language" method starts with Stage Three,- to "gather meaning" before successful decoding,- and produces guessing and inaccuracy.

What shall we read?

Why not start with the favorite books of pre-school days? Mother Goose. Fairy tales. Poetry. Our ancestors learned to read by using the Lord's Prayer on the old hornbook,-- not to learn the prayer: they already knew that by heart. They taught beginners to use a FESCUE (a straw, as in broomstraw) to point letter-by-letter, left-to-right. As they recited it out loud they could watch the letters do their work. To "read" something one already knows by heart is a sort of inside-out: as the learner recites he can watch how the letters match what he already knows. A bit of poetry or a familiar song can make a fine first reading lesson.

Learning to read is the beginning of all the rest of getting an education. ***And the most important person in anyone's schooling is the one who teaches him how to read.*** Don't quit!

This is a Fescue Card used for sounding-out in learning to read.

Slide the notch in the card to show the word, letter-by-letter, from left to right, so that the learner can sound it out.

The Fescue Card prevents reversals and guessing.